

Non-fiction writing

SCAFFOLDS

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Non-fiction writing scaffolds for Year 6

INTRODUCTION

Non-fiction Writing Scaffolds Year 6 is intended for use in schools to help teach children how to write effectively in a variety of non-fiction genres. It improves children's ability to organise their writing so that it has purpose by familiarising them with a system of planning which they can apply to any title. As they work through the units, the children assemble a portfolio of non-fiction texts containing genre-specific vocabulary and writing features. The chosen text types coincide with those in the Literacy Framework's text-level objectives.

Many non-fiction texts are essentially cross-curricular. Thus the ability to write specifically and purposefully about a subject will benefit other areas of study.

Each unit includes information and activities on at least one sentence-level objective. Therefore the book also enhances the children's knowledge of grammar, punctuation and style.

THE PROGRAMME CONTAINS:

a teachers' book comprising:

- notes for teachers on the genres
- a bibliography for each genre
- copies of exemplar texts together with teaching notes
- guidance on how to develop grammar and punctuation skills in children's writing
- guidance on how to write in the particular genre and on specific features of each non-fiction text.

a resource book of photocopiable material comprising:

- illustrated versions of the exemplar texts especially produced for children
- notes for the children on understanding the grammar and punctuation (optional reference material)
- photocopiable activity sheets to reinforce the grammar and punctuation (optional)
- notes and tips for the children on writing non-fiction texts (optional reference material)
- differentiated scaffolds which give the children choices and guide them through the course of the text they are about to write
- vocabulary banks for them to use and add to.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAMME

- 1 After examining texts in the target genre, read and discuss the exemplar text with the children, using the notes in the margin to highlight the examples of the unit's teaching point and writing feature. The children should follow the text using their own illustrated version from the Resource book.
- 2 Next, read through and explain the 'Understanding the grammar and punctuation' section of the unit. The children can do the activities together, either orally or using whiteboards, or independently on paper.
- 3 Then explain the 'Helpful hints' and 'Writing features' sections of the unit to the children.
- 4 Read through the scaffolds with the children. Then give them the differentiated word banks and ask them to record their own vocabulary suggestions in the space provided.
- 5 Give the children time to plan, write and edit their non-fiction text. Each child can then store the best copies in a writing folder.

NOTES

When using the scaffolds, give the children strict time limits to plan and write each of the sections. This will give them practice in writing timed non-fiction texts as preparation for the Key Stage 2 writing test.

However, the system is entirely flexible. The activities in each unit, from reading the exemplar to composing their own text using the scaffolds, can be used in shared or guided time, with the children working collaboratively or individually.

The sequential order of activities for each unit coincides exactly with the sequence for the teaching of writing outlined in Grammar for Writing (DfEE 0107/200). First the model can be discussed and its grammatical and thematic features interrogated during shared reading. Next the grammar and punctuation activities can be undertaken to reinforce the children's understanding of the relevant sentence-level objectives. The helpful hints section, scaffolds, and vocabulary banks support the teacher and children in shared writing sessions and in subsequent guided and independent writing.

The method works well with children of all abilities and with bilingual pupils, as it offers the security of a detailed framework and a bank of appropriate vocabulary together with the challenge of a grammar and writing features component for each unit.

The units fulfil the text-level and sentence-level requirements of the NLS Framework for Year 6 and revise components from Year 5, many of which feature in the Key Stage 2 tests. The following units may be used specifically in literacy lessons or they may be linked with work in other curriculum areas and used accordingly.

UNIT 1

Genre: autobiographies (T1, T12, T13)

Grammar and punctuation: imagery – similes, metaphors, personification, clichés, sensory images; parentheses; dashes. (T1, S6)

Writing features: the narrator as the subject; influences on the writer; descriptive writing; bias.

UNIT 2

Genre: biography (T1, T11, T14)

Grammar and punctuation: taking notes (T3, T17, T18); first and third person; capital letters.

Writing features: writing chronologically – the opening, childhood to adulthood, young adulthood/maturity.

UNIT 3

Genre: informal letters

Grammar and punctuation: using slang (T3, S2, T2, T20); apostrophes for omission and for possession.

Writing features: layout, structure and audience.

UNIT 4

Genre: formal letters – to complain, to inform, to persuade (T2, T20)

Grammar and punctuation: formal language (T2, S2); simple, compound and complex sentences; using commas (T2, S3).

Writing features: format, style and tone.

UNIT 5

Genre: instructions (T3, S1)

Grammar and punctuation: verbs and verb tenses (T3, T16); the use of the imperative (T2, S2); layout punctuation.

Writing features: organisation methods – numbered points and bullets, subheadings with paragraphs, continuous writing.

UNIT 6

Genre: leaflets and advertisements (T1, T12, T3, S1)

Grammar and punctuation: alliteration; puns; punctuating statements, questions, commands and exclamations.

Writing features: persuasive devices (T3, S1); language, fact and opinion (T1, T11); illustrations.

UNIT 7

Genre: recounts and chronological reports (T3, S1)

Grammar and punctuation: adjectives; adverbs; using capital letters for emphasis; asterisks.

Writing features: style and structure – personal and impersonal writing (T2, S2, T3, T20); orientation and reorientation; sentence starters.

UNIT 8

Genre: non-chronological texts – reports and explanations (T1, T12, T17, T3, S1, T15, T20)

Grammar and punctuation: paragraphs and linking paragraphs (T3, T21); the use of the passive voice; colons and semicolons (T2, S1, S6).

Writing features: gathering information and acknowledging sources including using quotes and writing a bibliography.

UNIT 9

Genre: journalistic writing (T1, T15, T16, T18)

Grammar and punctuation: clauses; phrases (T2, S3); prepositions; quotation marks.

Writing features: balance and bias; headlines (T3, S2); the inverted pyramid.

UNIT 10

Genre: discursive texts (T2, T15, T16, T18, T19)

Grammar and punctuation: using connectives (T1, S4, S5); how punctuation can alter meaning.

Writing features: structuring arguments.

Autobiographies

The word 'autobiography' is made up of three Greek words:

autos – self

bios – life

graphein – to write

In an autobiography, the writer is the main character because he is writing about himself. It is a personal story in which the writer selects episodes and events from his life that he thinks will interest the reader.

The writer has to be selective because it is impossible to remember every detail of his life, so he picks out relevant elements to inform and interest his reader. The views he expresses in his autobiography are obviously biased. He may give much more emphasis to some aspects of his life whilst others are not mentioned. In fact he can choose and use just what he wishes his audience to know. In this way, the writer can stress a particular viewpoint, whether it is a view of an event or an issue in recent history or a political view.

When reading an autobiography, it is interesting to think about why the author has written his story, who his audience is and what message he may be trying to put across. The reader should also try to separate fact from opinion.

An autobiography differs from a biography in that the writer is able to include facts known only to him. He can describe his thoughts, feelings, opinions, values and goals, whereas a biographer can only describe what he thinks his subject feels. An autobiography also often includes much more detail about events since the writer has actually experienced these moments and does not have to rely upon second-hand knowledge.

An autobiography is always a first person account because the author is the subject of the narrative.

Note: The story is adapted from an autobiography written by Sophie Pattinson, aged 14.

Autobiographies

Examples of autobiographies

Boy by Roald Dahl (New Windmills, Heinemann)

Coming to England by Floella Benjamin (Puffin)

Out of India by Jamila Gavin (Pavilion Books)

War Boy by Michael Foreman (Puffin)

Zlata's Diary by Zlata Filipovic (Puffin)

Also

Poems by Michael Rosen and Jackie Kaye

(For advanced readers)

Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah (Puffin)

Going Solo by Roald Dahl (New Windmills, Heinemann)

The children's illustrated version of this autobiography is on page 6 of the Resource book.

On arrival in an alien land¹

(an extract from 'A different kind of Christmas')

He wasn't there.²

Why not? Where was he?³

Travel weary, dishevelled, excited and eagerly anticipating the reunion with Tom, my big brother, I had planned this moment for months, travelled over 5,000 miles and now here I was, baggage collected, through customs and keenly scanning⁴ the sea of oriental faces for his blond head and his familiar grin.

But ... no Tom.

I could feel anxiety flutter in my stomach like the wings of a butterfly⁵ and panic rise like bile in my throat as my eyes darted up and down the arrivals lounge.

Where was he? Who to ask? Where to go? What to do?³

Everything was alien⁶ – the people, the language, even the signs were written in unrecognisable Chinese characters. I was here, in China, 14 years old, on my own, and not a clue as to what to do next. What should have been the best day of my life was rapidly becoming a nightmare.

Minutes ticked by, hours maybe...⁷

"There you are!" A breathless and apologetic voice behind me, then I found myself enveloped in a giant bear hug.

"Sorry, Soph, I overslept. Come on, let's go!"

Relief flooded through me; fear and disappointment were quickly forgotten and I could even find it quite amusing⁸ that I had travelled all these miles to see him and he'd⁹ actually overslept on the big day of my arrival.

Tom grabbed my bag and guided me out into the freezing Beijing air.

"The taxi wouldn't wait; we'll catch a bus," said Tom and I was bundled on to an ancient ramshackle vehicle with black smoke belching from its exhaust. So much for luxurious travel!

That journey was most definitely hair-raising and one that I'll⁹ never forget.

I'm told that I tend to exaggerate and to jump to dramatic conclusions¹⁰ but I swear that I am not exaggerating when I tell you¹¹ that I saw my whole life flash before my eyes as the breath was literally knocked out of me. This bus looked like an ordinary bus but there the similarity ended. At each and every stop, more and more people clambered over each other to squeeze in, until it seemed that at least two hundred people¹² were crushed together! The noise! The air was fetid, thick with the strong tobacco smoke prevalent in China. An occasional harsh clearing of the throat could be heard as someone hawked and spat a glob out of the window regardless of the unsuspecting pedestrians below.¹³

- 1 The title introduces the subject of the autobiography – the feeling of being in a totally alien situation.
- 2 Short opening sentence to give impact and invite the reader to read on.
- 3 Questions – who, what, where, why? Indicates anxious state of mind.
- 4 Gives emphasis to anticipation rather than simply 'looked for'.
- 5 Simile to express anxiety.
- 6 Again, the use of the word 'alien' to help convey the feeling of helplessness.
- 7 In an overanxious state minutes seem like hours. Also, the use of the agentless passive creates tension.
- 8 Many different emotions reflecting state of turmoil.
- 9 The use of the shortened form gives an informal tone to the writing.
- 10 Gives a clue to the writer's personality. There is evidence of exaggeration throughout the passage. The reader needs to bear this in mind.
- 11 The use of the 2nd person gives the feeling of talking directly to and involving the reader.
- 12 Exaggeration.
- 13 References to cultural behaviour.